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CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Karachi, Pakistan

October 10, 1978

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OFFICIAL-INFORMAL

Mr. Maxwell Chaplin
Deputy Chief of Mission
Buenos Aires, Argentina

During my consultations in Washington, I was requested to meet with Mark L. Schneider, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Rights concerning Human Rights issues in Argentina. I met with Mr. Schneider for over an hour. Following is a summary of that discussion:

Mr. Schneider asked if GOA officials were aware of the extent of human rights violations in Argentina, and if they were aware of the alleged secret detention camps. I told him that to the best of my knowledge they were, and would have to be, as the general anti-terrorist campaign had the support of the Government. Schneider asked if torture of prisoners continued. I told him that insofar as interrogation of terrorists, it was quite common. Schneider said they had a report [] that 97*percent of the people held under PENN were tortured. I told him that I had no information concerning people under PENN, and I tended to doubt if anyone had exact statistics concerning them. Schneider asked if people under PENN were executed as a matter of course. I said I doubted that; once they were under PENN, they were relatively safe. If they were going to be executed, they would be executed before they were placed under PENN, or as happened in the past, after they were released from PENN. Schneider asked if I had heard the report that no more than 500 people were in secret prisoners' camps at any one time. I told him that figure was given to me by a reliable Government source and I believed it is reasonably accurate.

* 90% BI

We then discussed the general role of the Federal Security Service and military elements in combating terrorism, and the decentralization of authority to area and sub-area commanders. Schneider asked if I had any idea as to how many people had been killed under the counter-terrorism program. I told him that I doubted if anyone had an exact number. The Security people I talked with could not supply

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U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

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what they felt was an accurate figure. Schneider asked if I thought it was closer to ten thousand than to two thousand. Based on discussions I have had with Security forces, I informed him it was closer to ten thousand, but no one knows for sure. Schneider asked if the Argentine Security Forces and military officials considered the Human Rights advocates in the State Department Marxists. I told him no. They consider them opportunists and felt that the U.S. Human Rights program is based on U.S. domestic political considerations, i.e., we are interested in cases that have a high profile in the U.S., Jewish journalists, etc., not necessarily in broad-based human rights.

One of the members of Schneider's staff asked if the Embassy's reporting on the Human Rights situation in Argentina was accurate. I told him I believed it was, and although I wasn't privy to all of the Embassy reports, I felt any allegations that could be substantiated or corroborated were reported. We then discussed the efforts by the Argentine military to recentralize security operations and to eliminate left-handed operations. I told Schneider that during the 14 months I was in Argentina there was improvement in the Human Rights area. But improvements come slow because of the bitterness against the terrorists and the underlying feeling of Security Forces that they have been the victims of Marxists aggression. Also, what the Argentines consider substantial improvements, we may not find satisfactory. For instance, if in 1976 and 1977 there were 200 to 300 disappearances per month and now there are only 15 to 20, the Argentines would consider that a major improvement. We would disagree with them.

Schneider asked if in my opinion the U.S. Human Rights policy had been helpful. I told him the broad-based concept of U.S. Human Rights was of value to Argentine officials trying to clean up their act, but the implementation of our policies, in many cases, was a setback for those Argentine Government officials who identify with us. For example, the cancellation of pending economic loans has very serious impact on our ability to favorably influence Argentine's activities in the Human Rights area. In many instances, they alienate Argentine officials whose cooperation is necessary if we want them to identify with U.S. long-range Human Rights objectives.

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I finalized the discussion by telling Schneider that there was definite progress being made, but that there would be many setbacks, disappearances and kidnappings which would temporarily distort our perspective of the progress being made.

I also told Schneider before and after the discussion that these Human Rights questions would be more appropriately raised with the Mission's Political or Human Rights Officers than with myself. My principal function was in the area of Security, not humanitarian affairs.

Prior to leaving Washington, I discussed these matters with Tony Freeman who recommended that I send you a memorandum covering my conversation with Schneider.

Best regards.

Sincerely,

Ronald J. Kelly
Ronald J. Kelly

Regional Security Supervisor

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